

A RESOLUTION to honor Donald F. Beisswenger on his dynamic  
life of service to humanity.

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the state of Tennessee should pause to honor the dedication and devotion of those citizens who have emerged as leaders in their respective professions and who have enhanced the quality of life for the many citizens whose lives have been touched by their good works; and

WHEREAS, Donald F. Beisswenger has been at the forefront of theological field education in this country for more than 30 remarkable years; and

WHEREAS, it has been said that few others have had as much influence on the shaping of theological field education programs as has Rev. Beisswenger; and

WHEREAS, while in undergraduate school at Macalester College in the early 1950's, a young Don Beisswenger was drawn to Christian service, and upon graduation, he enrolled in Yale University's Divinity School where he concentrated in ethics and community service; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Beisswenger began his pastorate in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1956 after serving as an intern in three rural Arkansas churches; in 1958, he and his family moved to Iowa where he became the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Creston; and

WHEREAS, while in the pulpit, Rev. Beisswenger became disenchanted with one aspect of the ministry; he felt that pastors "were disconnected from the world of work of the people" and he began his mission to forge alliances between "faith and work, faith and ethics, social responsibility, ethics at work, God in a day's work" and more; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Beisswenger moved his family to Chicago in 1962 where he became executive director of the Business/Industrial Ministry, an organization aimed at relating Christian

values and ethical understanding to the issues of persons in an urban/industrialized society; Rev. Beisswenger became particularly interested in faith and race and race as it relates to employment, fair housing, voter registration and other civil rights issues of the day; and

WHEREAS, upon an opening at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in church and community relations and field education, Rev. Beisswenger moved his family to Nashville and became an Associate Professor of Church and Community at the school and their Director of Field Education; and

WHEREAS, this well-respected theologian and gifted educator has given unreservedly of his time and talents to help develop the Divinity School's field education curriculum; with the notion of minister-theologian, he has incorporated practice into the learned ministry by emphasizing community organization, public life and social ministry; and

WHEREAS, in addition to social responsibility, Rev. Beisswenger emphasizes "another muscle of religious life", a life steeped in spirituality; he emphasizes solitude and the development of a life of prayer along with corporate worship; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Beisswenger's interest in spirituality prompted him, along with his wife, Joyce Horton Beisswenger, to establish the Penuel Ridge Retreat Center in Cheatham County in 1983, an interfaith center where people may withdraw from their active roles in society and find solitude; and

WHEREAS, with a volunteer staff, the Penuel Center has been a tremendous success; Rev. Beisswenger feels the solitude offered at the center is a way to let "the stew of one's life simmer a bit, not being so reactive and interactive but just letting the sense of God come forth and being receptive to that in our lives"; and

WHEREAS, alongside his interest in spirituality have been distinctive social interests; he has been actively involved locally in La Casa and Clergy and Laity Concerned and internationally with Witness for Peace, and with the Open Door Community in Atlanta; his experience with spiritual discipline and its relation to the poor and the marginalized has

prompted him to include work with the needy and homeless into the field education curriculum; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Beisswenger's remarkable efforts in theological field education have been noted nationwide, as he has written a number of important books and articles and has authored and edited three bibliographic studies; and

WHEREAS, his many successes aside, Rev. Beisswenger is most appreciative of the love and companionship he shares with his wife of nearly forty-two years, Joyce, and their six children, Rebecca, Suzanne, Phillip, Tom, Drew and Peter; and

WHEREAS, living a life of service, Don and Joyce Beisswenger have been active members of Edgehill United Methodist Church for twenty-five years; Don Beisswenger has given unreservedly of himself as Coordinator of Closing the Distance Committee, an inner city relations, leadership and worship program, and Joyce Beisswenger plays piano at the church and has been very active in the YWCA, volunteering in the vocational aptitude program that helps women find a new vocation; and

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of this body to recognize those eminent citizens of this state who, in realizing God's purpose in their lives, have rendered an unparalleled dimension of service to this great state and its citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor Donald F. Beisswenger for a lifetime of service as a professional, an educator and person of faith. We thank him for his dedication and devotion to Tennessee and the church and, as he completes his final year at Vanderbilt's Divinity School, we wish him continued success in all of his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.